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ABSTRACT

Women of many nations, particularly the industrialized countries, are achieving greater opportunity and equality in the working world. The rate at which women are joining the work force has confounded all predictions and created unexpected difficulties in securing equal pay and access to jobs and training. The most direct discrimination, separate wage scales for men and women, has been resolved for most occupations in the industrialized countries. Yet women's earnings remain substantially lower than men's. Sweden is regarded as a model for other countries because it considers married women an important source of labor and has made provisions to accommodate them in the labor force. International organizations have given increasing attention to women's employment issues. The International Labor Organization has emphasized education and training for women and a review of the effects of social security systems on women. The United Nations has provided for development of regional plans to achieve equality for women and to integrate women into their nation's development efforts. In general, labor unions have moved as slowly as employers in pressing for equal treatment for women. Working women's networks, formal and informal contacts among women for advice and assistance, are becoming an important force internationally. (LMS)

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The One World of Working Women

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U.S. Department of Labor
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Monograph No. 1

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Secretary of Labor

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Deputy Under Secretary
International Affairs

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EDUCATION & WELFARE
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PREFACE

This is the first in a series of occasional monographs in which the Department of Labor will report on international labor matters in other countries that are pertinent to developments in the United States.

Through this series, the Department hopes to stimulate discussion, encourage further study, and provide policy makers inside and out of government with useful information and analyses.

We believe you will be interested in this report on the progress women of many nations are making in achieving greater opportunity and equality in the working world. The author, Anne H. Nelson, is associate director of Cornell University's Institute for Education and Research on Women and Work, an activity of the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

Howard D. Samuel
Deputy Under Secretary
International Affairs

What surprised them was how much they had in common, that the same kinds of discrimination existed in both developing and industrial nations....

by Anne H. Nelson

"We do not have a formal separation of men's and women's pay but women earn less." The speaker is a Norwegian Member of Parliament.

"Although our constitution provides for equal pay, only 2 percent of the women earn the same income as men." The speaker is a German Member of the Bavarian Parliament.

"There is no discrimination in legislation in that there is only one law for both men and women." The speaker is an African trade unionist puzzled by the discrepancy between the law and the facts.

The voices were those of women from the labor movements of 15 nations. They were comparing their experiences at a 10-day seminar in Israel toward the end of the International Women's Year. They were gathered to learn from each other, share strategies, problems, and successes. They knew their problems could not be solved by a monolithic approach but only by each country applying the remedies appropriate to it.

What surprised them was how much they had in common, that the same kinds of discrimination existed in both developing and industrial nations and that working women in both had the same practical needs to ease their burdened lives: housekeeping equipment, child care, jobs that could be fitted around their family schedules and the chance to train for upgrading. This discovery of commonality was repeated in other forums during IWY 1975 and it has been rediscovered wherever working women have met since then.

International Women's Year released a torrent of public and private documentation of the widespread discrimination against women that exists in the world's labor markets. International bodies, national commissions, labor organizations and women's groups focused attention on the gap between men's and women's wages and occupations, between their abilities to carry dual roles as workers and family heads, and between men's sense of self-worth as valuable members of their economic worlds and women's lack of it.

This report will discuss some of the changes that have occurred, particularly in the industrialized nations, the problems that remain and some reasons for them and implications for public policy and women's activity.

Flurry of Initiatives Not Enough

The United Nations' resolution of December 1972 that proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year (IWY) inspired national governments to adopt equal pay goals. Some countries issued declarations, others amended their constitutions, ratified international conventions or passed specific legislation. Many honored IWY by creating official women's commissions, usually with investigative and advisory powers only. Britain's equal pay and equal opportunity legislation was more thorough. It provided an oversight commission and also a new Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service for first-step claims, and legal remedies if conciliation fails. The UN initiatives begun for IWY were extended by proclamation to a "Decade for Women and Development, 1976-1985." New UN programs to carry out the World Plan of Action adopted at the 1975 Mexico City conference for IWY were developed to achieve the goals of that first world meeting of women.

Today women's regular participation in the economies of the industrialized nations,

Why do so few women fill decision making posts in the official commissions that espouse principles of equality?

and to some degree of the developing nations, is generally accepted. The principle of equal pay and equal access to jobs and training opportunities has been substantially accepted as well. But, as in other areas of life, principles are easier to embrace than to follow.

The rate at which women are joining the workforce has confounded all predictions and created unexpected difficulties in securing equal pay and access to jobs and training. Married women are pouring into the labor markets of every industrialized country. In Europe and the United States, the most rapidly growing group is composed of mothers with preschool children. Although these women work primarily for needed family income, the vast majority are finding they enjoy the change from family and house responsibilities.

They probably are in the workforce to stay, and their presence challenges old patterns. For example, how is child care to be accommodated with work? Child care arrangements and facilities will be needed surely, but what these new workers need most are part-time jobs. That creates a problem since part-time work typically is penalized by low pay, little security and no future. As permanent members of the workforce, women will seek to change that. Providing them with equal pay and work opportunities is likely to require restructuring of existing jobs, pay scales and benefits, and to change employment patterns for men as well as women.

Eli Ginzberg, Columbia University economist and head of the National Commission on Manpower Policy, was quoted by the *New York Times* as predicting that the "revolution in the roles of women . . . will have an even greater impact than the rise of Communism and the development of nuclear energy." Problems seem to be the daily menu whenever great social changes occur, and they must be reported. But the very existence of these problems is a sign that something is being done to right the deeply rooted inequities borne by one-third of the world's labor force.

Wage Disparities

The most direct discrimination, separate wage scales for men and women, has been resolved for most occupations in the industrialized nations. Collectively bargained agreements by and large have integrated wage lists for the same jobs, and men's and women's minimum wages have been equalized. Most of these changes have been quite recent, however. It was not until 1975 that Australia, for example, raised its minimum wage for women from 85 percent of men's to 100 percent.

Yet despite legal elimination of the grossest pay discrimination, women's earnings remain substantially lower. France estimates they are 66 percent of men's; Britain reports they are not yet two-thirds. In the United States they run about 60 percent. Even in Sweden, with its massive commitment to equality, women's pay so far stands at 86 percent of men's. The search for the causes of wage disparities has led to questions about equal job opportunity, including some pointed questions about the seriousness of the commitment among international bodies.

Men in Decision Making Posts

Why do so few women fill decision making posts in the official commissions that espouse principles of equality? The World Plan of Action points to the need for the UN and other international bodies to clean house themselves, review their employment records and set an example by eliminating in their own agencies those practices that discriminate against women. The point was made again at the National Women's Conference held in Houston in 1977. There the call for international agencies to clean house high-

In Germany, there is constitutional protection but not enabling legislation. The burden of proving discrimination is on the woman. . . .

lighted a general tendency of government agencies in the United States and elsewhere to delay full application of equal opportunity regulations by requiring compliance first from the private sector.

The employment record of the European Commission in Brussels, for instance, shows that although more than 40 percent of the 7,900 employees are female, no woman is a commissioner, only two women hold the rank of director, and few are in even the lower decision making levels. The vast majority, 83 percent, hold secretarial posts. The International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) suffer from a similar imbalance.

That it is important to have women well represented in top levels of agencies with responsibility for equality is illustrated by the experience in Belgium. Writing in the March-April 1977 issue of ILO's *International Labour Review*, C. Pichault reports that the "problems of women's employment take a back seat because there are so many other problems to consider and the bodies concerned are run almost exclusively by men. . . It has to be admitted that action on behalf of women is not pursued with great energy . . ." He attributes much of the progress that has been made by the Belgian Commission on the Employment of Women to the fact that it is composed chiefly of women and that they bring commitment and perseverance to their task.

Other benefits of women's representation in all levels of the occupational hierarchy are demonstrated in new research conducted on women's employment in New York State government. The researcher, Susan Mackenzie, found that although the civil service system officially provides for advancement based on merit, wherever the distribution of women in management position was high, women in lower level positions were far more likely to be moved up into jobs appropriate to their skills. Appointment of women to decision making posts may well be the surest way of providing equal opportunity to women generally.

Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value

The phrase, "equal pay for work of equal value," needs definition if the declarations in support of it are to have practical meaning. What does equal pay mean? Does it really mean what a British union recently dubbed it: "Men's pay for women?" Or can unequal wage scales be justified as at least equitable because many women have child rearing functions and lower physical strength? Are low wages for women's work really shameful evidence of exploitative job classifications? Or can they be considered merely a non-discriminatory result of an over-supply of labor for the jobs women happen to fill?

Answers to these questions are not as self-evident abroad as we like to think they are at home. In most countries the legal recourse used in the United States to define such terms as "equal pay" is not available. In November 1977, Nicole Pasquier of France, then delegate for women's affairs to the Prime Minister's Office, pointed out the difficulty a French working woman would have in fighting discrimination. There is no public agency to help finance and prepare a case, and affirmative action policies supported by government policy and guidelines are "unheard of" in France. As a result, few suits are brought.

In Germany, there is constitutional protection but not enabling legislation. The burden of proving discrimination is on the woman, since evidence of a pattern and practice of discrimination is not accepted as grounds for reasonable doubt. Where specific government support and legal machinery are not available, challenges take more time and money and courage than most of us will ever have.

"Work of equal value" also needs definition. The attempt to define it has brought increasing realization that social assumptions and legal subterfuges have down-graded the value of the work women perform. What does "work of equal value" mean? How is value to be measured if men and women work at different jobs? Comparability cannot be used, for example, between the work of a parking lot attendant and a secretary. New instruments of job evaluation will be needed, and they are only now beginning to be discussed.

Comparable Worth Studies

Probably the two most thorough attempts to analyze job content for sex-neutral pay purposes have been the "comparable worth" study in this country by the State of Washington, and the Rutenfranz-Rohmert study in Germany. The "comparable worth" investigation, conducted by Norman D. Willis and Associates, evaluated 121 state job classifications according to knowledge and skills required, mental demands, accountability and working conditions. A weighted evaluation system allowed comparison of unlike jobs. The study showed that jobs held predominantly by women averaged about 75 percent of the pay of those held predominantly by men; where evaluation weights were equal, no woman's job made as much as the poorest paid male job of the same worth. The practice of granting wage increases on a percentage basis further complicated the bleak picture since with each raise, the pay gap widens. This practice, common in the United States, has been turned upside down by the Swedes, as will be described later.

West Germany, at the instigation of the Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) and particularly of its Women's Division, mounted a re-evaluation of the work classification scheme that had effectively relegated women to low-paid job categories. The prevailing wage scale in that country is established in a series of steps that divides "light work" at the bottom of the wage scale from "heavy work" at the top. The amount of physical effort required for the work is the primary measure used for job classification. Not surprisingly, over 70 percent of all women are in the light work/low wage steps. The team of Rutenfranz and Rohmert applied evaluative points to over 200 aspects of the content of light work jobs. In the process they refined the description of physical effort needed. For example, if a woman lifts 15 pound packages all day long, is that light work because one 15 pound package is a light weight? They also gave particular attention to the degree of stress involved in the job. Their report, published in 1975, provided a tool for negotiating more equitable pay, but it has yet to be used. Neglect of its suggestions is partly due to the fact that the report language is a thicket of technical expressions not easily understood by negotiators, but it has run into other obstacles as well.

Both these attempts to define "work of equal value" have run into money problems. Washington State is attempting to incorporate the "comparable worth" recommendations gradually, and some local governments, businesses and organizations are reported to be applying the concept. But its women employees and their unions believe that education and pressure will be needed for some time before the inequities are corrected.

The Rutenfranz-Rohmert report, on the other hand, has been rejected by the German Employers Association (BDA) which maintained from the outset that there was no discrimination. Moreover, with women representing 52 percent of all unemployed Germans in early 1977, the recession has hurt prospects for upgrading or revising the scales. Momentum to adopt the new measures will have to be generated in the face of employer resistance. It probably will have to await

... the argument was made that with a wage system based on age and seniority increments, it was not desirable to retain women for too long.

stronger union support and a more favorable economic climate.

Perplexing questions about work of equal value have been only one aspect of the challenge of equal pay. Other, more basic questions had to be asked: Why do women everywhere hold undervalued jobs? Why are they so regularly members of the secondary or reserve workforce? The search for answers uncovered a host of societal constraints, all assigning women workers to an inferior status and many embodied in national legislation: sex segregated occupations, marital bars to employment, termination of employment upon birth of the first child, bars to education and training programs for skilled trades or job advancement, inadequate arrangements for care of children and dependent parents, protective legislation that fixes masculine height and weight standards for some jobs and protects women from night work and overtime pay in others. Finally, basic hostility to acceptance of equal economic roles were found in both men and women.

Litigation as a Tool

An upsurge in litigation of women's employment issues is one result of the new questioning and the new information. Although deplored in some quarters and considered unnecessary by many people of good will, litigation has proved an important means for hastening correction of discriminatory societal assumptions. Certainly in the United States, litigation captured the attention of employers faster than exhortation. The Conference Board report, *Nondiscrimination in Employment: 1963-1972*, quotes a personnel executive:

"It was a district court case that first brought the matter of sex discrimination to our attention. When we began to look into our own practices, we were horrified.... Most of our local employment people simply assumed that women should only be considered for light assembly jobs or for office/clerical jobs.... and even at corporate headquarters it was very hard to sell the idea that women might be able to do well on certain jobs."

The marriage bar has been challenged successfully in one country after another, frequently by airline flight attendants. Rules on termination of employment for reasons of pregnancy have generally been overthrown. Yet traditional attitudes toward married women's employment continue to obstruct employment equality.

The most extreme example of the problem among industrialized nations still is found in Japan. There the dual structure of employment for men and women underpins a wage structure which depends on women not working long periods since wages are geared to seniority and age, while women's work is almost wholly confined to unskilled jobs. Women are generally expected to retire soon after they marry or at the birth of the first child. Although retirement age varies by occupation and industry, in private industry women have been urged to retire at about age 30.

The dilemma was confronted in Japanese courts in 1973 when retirement at age 30 was challenged. In defense of the rule, the argument was made that with a wage system based on age and seniority increments, it was not desirable to retain women for too long. The court ruled that the argument applied equally to unskilled men and that to differentiate by sex was unlawful.

Nevertheless, informal encouragement of early retirement continues. Clearly a problem remains for women in that nation who try to re-enter the workforce after they have interrupted their work for child rearing. Only secondary employment without a union contract is usually feasible since the structure of the primary labor market poses the problem of how much to pay a newly hired, middle-aged woman. Wages for a young person would be too low, while wages that corresponded to her age would be too high.

Instead of importing "guest workers"... Sweden tapped its remaining source of domestic labor — married women. Today, over 50 percent of the workforce is female.

Companies solve the riddle by not offering regular employment to re-entry women.

The decision of the European Community to assert the principle of equal pay led in 1976 to the first equal pay ruling of the European Court of Justice which has jurisdiction over the nine Common Market nations. Gabrielle Defrenne, a Belgian flight attendant, claimed her pension was less than a man in her job would have received because the mandated retirement for women at age 40 was discriminatory. After her claim was rejected by a Belgian court, she carried it to the European Court, basing her case on Article 119, the equal pay for equal work clause of the Treaty of Rome, the "constitution" of the European Community. She appealed for back pay on the ground that contractual fringe benefits are indirect wages. Although Sabena Airlines lawyers, backed by attorneys from Britain and Ireland, argued that Article 119 was only a principle and national laws were needed to give it force, she won the case and the back pay. Since the European Court of Justice is the Community's court of last resort, no national court can overturn its decision.

The landmark precedent set by the Defrenne case will cast a long shadow over future business and contractual relationships in Europe. If the United States experience is any clue to what may happen there, questions regarding equal pay are likely to be matters of top management concern in Europe for many years to come. Speculation before settlement of the Defrenne case was that if she won, women of all nine Common Market nations might file similar suits against governments and corporations that could cost billions in back pay settlements. To prevent a flood of claims, the European Court ruled that only women who had already begun legal proceedings could collect retroactively.

A new initiative of Mlle. Defrenne raises the question of retirement age for flight attendants. For the second time she is appealing to the European court, resting her case on the Community directive of equal treatment. If successful, the retirement age for women will be 55 years, the same as that for men, up from the former age of 45.

While labor legislation and collectively bargained agreements provide the primary protection for workers, court interpretations of both can have large consequences. It has been difficult to bring discrimination cases to the courts, and in no other country is litigation resorted to as extensively as in the United States. Yet as machinery for eliminating discrimination is established, as directives of the European Community acquire legal force, and as ratification of ILO conventions and adoption of national equal pay and opportunity laws proceed, we should expect that litigation will be used more often.

The Swedish Solution

Sweden is widely regarded as a model for other countries. When others in Europe were solving the labor shortages of the 1960s by importing "guest workers" from depressed nations of the Mediterranean and elsewhere, Sweden, after a brief flirtation with the method, made the important decision to tap instead its remaining source of domestic labor — married women. Today, over 50 percent of the workforce is female; about 71 percent of women workers belong to unions, far higher than the United States' 12 percent, Germany's 20 percent, or Austria's 44 percent. Sweden, in good part because of deliberate government policy, reports that 60 percent of all married women work, up from 15 percent in 1950. A high 36 percent of all employed women work part-time and most of them are married; this contrasts with 29 percent in the United States and a lower proportion of married part-timers.

The Swedish approach to women's equality is unique in several ways:

First, it is dedicated to making it possible

Women returning to the workforce after years out for child rearing are not only advised to train for non-traditional fields, but get financial assistance while they train.

for men as well as women to take on the double roles of family care and work life.

Second, it supports the view of women's economic equality as being only one aspect of the society's general search for equality among all groups; Sweden does not subscribe to special treatment of women. For example, women's divisions were recently dropped by Swedish labor unions in favor of family planning committees on which both men and women can be active.

Third, a substantial program of support services (child care, housekeeping assistance) and a massive vocational education program for adults has been instituted.

Wage policy in Sweden is set nationally by collective bargaining and wage rates established for organized sectors become the standard rates for the same occupations that are not organized. The challenge to provide equal pay has been approached from two angles. One is to raise the lowest pay. The other is to break down the distinctions between men's work and women's work and to integrate the sexes in all jobs.

Family Policy

Almost 20 years ago, with the assistance of government economists and other experts, the employers and unions agreed to gradually close the gap between wages paid for all jobs. Every time a raise is negotiated, more goes to the low paid workers than to high. Although the policy applies to both sexes, it has narrowed the gap significantly between men's and women's earnings. It was first applied in the 1960s at a time when women's wages were about 65 percent of men's; by 1974 they were 86 percent. The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) supports the method and has its own program for equality, called "Family Policy." As set forth in its 1976 report, the program rests on five declarations:

1. All adults should be economically independent of others.
2. All adults should have the opportunity of full development of their personalities.
3. Children should have equal chances as regards upbringing.
4. In the measures taken by the society, priority should be given in such a way that help is given first to those that need it most.
5. Equality of the sexes must form a part of the general policy of equality.

Since achievement of equal pay probably is not possible without at the same time eliminating the dual labor market — one for men and one for women — the Swedes have attacked that problem as well. The Government created in 1972 the Advisory Council to the Prime Minister on Equality between Men and Women. The Advisory Council considers one of its most important tasks is broadening the labor market for women. Geographic mobility, for instance, is identified as important. Consequently if during the job placement process a woman finds work in another locality, she is helped with moving expenses and finding housing and child care. Women returning to the workforce after years out for child rearing are not only advised to train for non-traditional fields, but get financial assistance while they train — even for long periods — and receive aid for such incidental costs as transportation between school and home.

Employers receive subsidies for the on-job training offered to women. Firms desiring government assistance in plant location or relocation can receive it, provided they agree to hire at least 40 percent women if the industry is predominantly male, or 40 percent men if the industry is predominantly female. For the past few years, a system of quotas has governed admission to training programs for teachers of preschool children, and the favored group is male.

Either parent may remain home on about 90 percent pay to care for sick children, although it is usually women (after all, why lose a day's high pay when the mother's pay is lower?).

Alice Cook in *Working Mother* reports that "adjustment teams" consisting of representatives of the Swedish Labor Market Agency, the union and management are going into plants and other businesses "with a view to adjusting the work process to the capabilities of the locally available manpower." Where women are the available labor force, adjustment may call for flexitime, shorter time, break-out or consolidation of functions. Not only do the Swedes encourage women to enter the workforce and help them with training and placement programs, but as Cook observes, they also are working imaginatively to adjust the job to the woman.

Child Care Arrangements

Since easing of family responsibilities is important in attracting married women into the labor market, larger child care facilities are necessary. Women in training programs and those returning to work are given priority on the waiting lists for child care places. The large apartment complexes in Stockholm provide such unusual aids as hot dinners, family mending, laundry drop-offs, and after-school transportation to piano lessons. Both parents share child care leave for six months after birth. Either parent may remain home on about 90 percent pay to care for sick children, although it is usually women who take it (after all, why lose a day's high pay when the mother's pay is lower?). Either parent may receive the child care allowance that is provided until the child's sixteenth year.

Despite these aids, Sweden reports that no great changes have occurred in the labor market's traditional patterns. Most young women in vocational courses train for such traditionally female occupations as beautician. Women are as uncommon in the high income brackets and responsible positions as they are common in the low. The Commission on Low Wages reports that 67 percent of workers at the bottom pay rung are women. However, since the pay scale governed by collective bargaining has only a 14 percent spread between the highest and lowest pay, the net result has been to secure better parity than has been achieved by any other nation.

The Swedish model has succeeded in opening opportunities to women and in smoothing the earnings differential between the sexes. It reportedly has not succeeded in moving women into decision making positions in either the private or public sectors, and it has made only slow progress in moving them into traditionally male occupations. The relative success of Swedish efforts is a reminder that social policies and educational reforms take a long time. It may also be an indication that governmental encouragement of women to be more ambitious in their job aspirations is less effective than the experience of the United States, where women, far from being encouraged, had to *demand* equal consideration.

The Nordic countries, Australia, and others have chosen non-governmental means for achieving equality. Their methods depend on collective bargaining combined with moral suasion and governmental expertise. The United States, of course, stands at the other end of the spectrum. With similar social goals and a similar commitment to equal opportunity, the United States has chosen the path of governmental intervention, of laws backed by regulatory oversight. Individuals may appeal to the courts singly or in class action suits. Patterns and practices are investigated for evidence of systematic discrimination and government commissions are empowered to institute proceedings against employers who violate equal pay or opportunity guidelines.

Both methods have much to recommend them. Neither has succeeded in eliminating discrimination. Yet hardly a day goes by without fresh news of women achieving positions of distinction in the United States. Census data show that women have success-

fully invaded many male preserves — real estate, the armed forces, professional and managerial positions unthinkable only two or three years ago. Since there is always a year's lag at best in reporting labor force data, the same changes may be occurring in countries that eschew legislative and judicial remedies. Nevertheless, as of the close of 1977, women in the United States appear to be making more rapid headway than most others in breaking out of the traditionally female occupations of their country.

Substantial progress has been made in the countries at either end of the spectrum: Swedish working women have a more equitable wage structure; American women seem to have had greater success in breaking down occupational barriers. In both countries, it seems fair to say, equality between men's and women's earnings has been achieved only at the bottom of the occupational ladder.

Action of International Organizations

In a conversation three years ago, a former U.S. foreign policy officer, now officer of a large foundation, urged a researcher to abandon study of the effect international organizations have on the problems of women in European countries. He considered their effect negligible and not worth the research effort. Instead, he urged a narrower examination of national actions.

Certainly international declarations must be implemented at national levels. True, both national and international bodies have found it far easier to praise equal opportunity than to practice it. Nevertheless, the recommendations of intergovernmental and international labor and employer organizations often have bridged the distance between nations that are pace setters and those that lag behind. The fact that for most nations, attention to women's employment issues began in 1972 as preparation for IWY, indicates at least some potency in the recommendations of international bodies. Recommendations have been the occasion for some countries to make a start, for others to spur efforts already begun, and for the European Community to issue directives that bind members to results and timetables though not to particular methods.

1978 is a big year for women in the European Community. By the end of it, all nine members (Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Holland, Luxembourg, Britain, Ireland, Denmark) are to have developed legislation that will clear the way for expansion of employment opportunities for women. The Equal Treatment Directive of 1976 that mandated the Community changes aimed at the underlying causes of the wage and occupation gap between men and women. It required the abolition or amendment of any existing laws, administrative regulations, and contract provisions that are contrary to equal treatment and related to:

1. Access to employment (in criteria for selection, promotion, and dismissal).
2. Vocational training for women.
3. Working conditions (a reference to protective legislation).

It abolished discrimination based not only on sex but also on marital and family status. Judicial process is emphasized and national legal systems are required to provide ways for persons who consider themselves wronged to press their claims. A special provision obliges member states to inform workers of their equal treatment rights and how to secure them.

Not all members are yet in compliance. Britain is farthest ahead with its Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts in force since the end of 1975. The British law has some interesting differences from the American and the heads of its Equal Opportunity Commission consider the less stringent rules will work well in their country. Jurisdiction for cases which the new Conciliation Service fails to adjust are lodged in Britain's industrial tri-

bunals. Marie Patterson, one of two women members of the British Trades Union Congress's executive does not expect more litigation than can be handled and certainly not the amount that has backlogged in courts of the United States.

Emphasis on Social Security

The European Commission is now emphasizing social security. A draft directive covering pension rights, unemployment benefits, and medical care has been submitted, and it is possible that action on it could be taken in 1978. There are indications, however, that member states, fearful of the costs, may be backing away from action during this recession. Yet the directive will not attempt to do everything at once. The first phase will be the easy one. It requires members to exclude from their systems those provisions, such as earlier pension rights, that are considered favorable to women.

The Community's decision to intervene in expansion of training opportunities for women over age 25 emphasizes vocational training. The program is supposed to get underway in 1978. In the first year approximately eight million European units of account (EUA)—a new currency measure proposed for adoption in 1978—or about 1.5 percent of the Social Fund's budget will be used for matching grants to regions with the most severe imbalances in men's and women's employment. The allocation is expected to rise to 25 million EUA's by 1981.

Finally, in 1978 members will report on what has been done to implement the 1975 Equal Pay Directive that required legal recourse in discrimination cases and annulment of all wage scales or contract provisions that violate equal pay principles. The Women's Affairs Bureau of the Community, formerly directed by Jacqueline Nonon and now by Florence Morgan, expects to have ready by fall of 1978 a handbook that will review progress and list women's organizations active in member countries.

The OECD, composed of the world's industrialized nations, does not demand national coordination of policies but its discussions of economic policy affect national decisions, and the policies of its 24 members have extensive impact on those of many other nations. Its members exchange information on common problems, find out what works in other countries and pick up ideas for legislation that will help their own situations. In 1974 OECD established a Working Party on the Role of Women in the Economy, largely at the behest of the United States. The Working Party already has submitted draft reports and is expected to submit its final report to the Manpower and Social Affairs Committee, of which it is an arm, sometime in 1978. The Committee can then accept it, reject it, or change it. Or it may choose a neutral role and ask the Secretary General of the OECD to publish the report under his authority if he wishes. It is unlikely that any recommendation will be sent to the Council for action since few are, and since women's employment issues do not have high priority. The work and the report, however, might start an initiative leading to Council action later. The OECD appears to recognize the problem but gives it low priority on account of the present employment and money problems which beset national economies.

ILO is the standard setting organization in labor matters for much of the world. It couches its conventions and recommendations in language that clearly states its purpose but which is general enough for adaptation to a wide variety of national contexts. In honor of International Women's Year, ILO conducted a serious review of its two major conventions on employment equality: Equal Remuneration, No. 100 (1951), and Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), No. 111 (1958). The 60th session of the International

Labor Conference, held during IWY, received a report on the status of equal pay among member nations with a comprehensive discussion of the causes for its slow implementation. By its adoption of a far-sighted Declaration of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment, which is expected to be readied for submission as a convention, ILO is prodding members to look behind simplistic explanations, to go beyond easy resolutions. Its newest emphasis, like that of the Common Market countries, is on education and training together with a review of the effect of social security systems on women. Its work has highlighted the failure of development planners to make female labor more skilled and more resourceful as a means of speeding economic and social development.

ILO policies on women's work have preceded those of other international organizations and of most nations. Its movement—from the general concept of equal pay, to a second phase that emphasized "equal pay for work of equal value," to a third stage of broad investigation of the employment practices and legal and social barriers to equal treatment—has set the path that others have followed.

What obligation does a member state assume when it ratifies ILO conventions? A flexible one indeed, yet one that is binding. Members are bound to "promote" the application of the principle in national laws, or in collective agreements, or wherever government is in a position to exert influence on the fixing of wage rates and the elimination of employment discrimination. Countries that ratify the conventions have committed themselves to doing something to advance equal treatment. Thereby they have created a basis for action and appeal that could be used by women, were women aware of the commitment. Unfortunately, national publicity of ratification is all too rare.

ILO endorses the policy that women's needs and problems should be dealt with in the same general framework as men's. For example, women's issues are represented in most aspects of its World Employment Program launched in 1969, and their representation has led to a better understanding of women's economic role and special difficulties particularly in the rural areas of the world. But to single out women's issues has been considered undesirable. Desirable or not, Conventions 100 and 111 have recognized women's problems as so large and so unyielding that special statements and special programs have had to be drawn up.

The United Nations of course has broader reach though its goals are less specific than those of ILO. The World Plan of Action provides for development during the Decade for Women and Development of regional plans to achieve equality for women and to integrate women into their nation's development efforts. A second world conference to measure progress will be held in Teheran in May 1980. Planning for that two-week event focuses on action steps for accelerating equal treatment rather than a review of long-term goals.

How Has The Decade Fared?

One way to measure accomplishment is by the financial contributions made by member nations to underpin UN initiatives. By the end of 1977, less than $4 million had been pledged. Pledges and contributions ranged from $500 to $50,000 from 26 developing nations; the remainder to be contributed by eight industrial nations led by the United States' pledge of $2.6 million and the British pledge of almost $700,000. This uneven and relatively low level of funding for the opening of opportunities to women is repeated in the domestic appropriations of member countries where some national commissions are reported lucky to get $1,000 for their work.

The Decade's funds are channelled mainly through the UN Regional Economic Com-

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missions. The regional commissions were established to formulate their own strategies for implementing the World Plan of Action. Helvi Sipula, assistant secretary-general responsible for women's questions, reported to the March 1978 meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women that regional plans of action have been developed for three of the four developing regions — Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America — and that one is expected soon for Western Asia. Although Europe is the fifth region, a plan for it is not in preparation, and North America is not a designated region. The absence of Decade activity in industrialized nations may be one reason for the low contributions to the Decade's fund. The integration of rural women in development, and the expansion of their economic functions is the major focus of the UN effort. Its emphasis is on the needs of the world's economically marginal women. In this respect the "Percy Amendment" (Senator Charles Percy of Illinois) serves as a model for other nations and for domestic programs of the United States itself. It requires that programs assisted by the United States be reviewed for their impact on women in the recipient countries.

For international organizations, the composition of delegations attending meetings appears to present two problems. A Catch-22, common to all countries including the United States, is that when women's issues are the subject of the meetings, the delegates selected are often women; but because they are women, they usually are not the people responsible for carrying out recommendations adopted. For this reason, each woman delegate can be a significant leader in her country and yet not have sufficiently high authority to insure weight behind her recommendations back home. A second problem reported is that delegates often are chosen for political reasons unrelated to their interest or accomplishments in advancing women's issues. Outreach seems to be needed to involve women who are experienced and knowledgeable on special issues, and who have a constitutency of their own.

Role of Labor Unions

The central political problem labor has in representing women's employment interests is that it also represents the people who already hold the jobs to which women are beginning to aspire. In addition, labor represents young workers and older workers, both of whom are threatened by unemployment, uncertainty about their future, and as far as they are concerned, by women's requests for a bigger piece of the pie.

By and large, the men who run unions are not so much biased as harried. In those countries where labor has assumed a voice in management decisions, notably Germany and Sweden, the demands on the skills of a labor leader would tax the acumen of Solomon and the stamina of Tarzan. Yet leaders generally rise out of the rank and file; they are elected to office and are not particularly professional at anything.

Unions have moved as slowly as employers in pressing for equal treatment for women. Skilled trades have always been fearful that admission of low-paid women to their ranks would result in driving down their high wage levels which depend on scarcity as much as skill. But some unions have acted. Metal workers unions in most countries have women's divisions and a national women's officer who works with local shop committees. The Transport Workers Federation (ITF) has conducted regional seminars for women in Latin America and Asia. And the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees (FIET) held a World Women's Conference in 1975 with subsequent regional meetings where a statement of women's objectives was drafted and later adopted by the union's 1976 World Congress. The World Congress made a special appeal to affiliates "to do their utmost to prevent the

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discussions of the problems of working women — begun during International Women's Year in 1975 — from petering out. . . ."

Neither in the United States nor in other countries do women have the representation on union governing bodies that their numbers warrant. Some ways that unions have for compensating for this lack are to reserve seats for women on executive boards, establish special women's committees, conduct women's conferences, and encourage more women to run for office. Right now the most widespread participation of women in bargaining activities is at the plant level. In Europe the works councils, with grievance and bargaining functions similar to those of local industrial unions in this country, have increased the participation of women. The German Federation of Labor (DGB) reports 28.2 percent more women were elected to works councils in 1975 than in previous years, and in Canada a woman, Grace Hartman, was elected president of the country's largest union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Shirley Carr had been elected executive vice president of the Canadian Labor Congress two years earlier.

Although women are increasingly active in the U.S. labor movement, those in top leadership are still comparatively few, and their representation at national conventions remains low. The December 1978 AFL-CIO convention reported a fractional increase in the number of women delegates, 34 out of a total of 886, but more than the 20 or fewer thought to have attended two years earlier. The convention warmly recognized Joyce Miller, president of the four-year-old Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and endorsed the activities of the Coalition. It repeated its support of the Equal Rights Amendment, and President Meany called on organized labor in states which have not yet ratified the amendment to put their political strength to work for ratification. At a CLUW legislative conference in the spring, Meany electrified the group by declaring himself a "closet feminist" as he accepted honorary membership in the Coalition.

In the United States and abroad, labor education is considered a way for women to make up for the years missed from the workforce at a time when people were tapped for union leadership. The Trade Union Women's Studies program of Cornell University's Institute for Education and Research on Women and Work is one model for what can be done to help union women catch up with the information and skills they need to improve their positions in the union leadership hierarchy and to realize their individual education goals. In that program, women receive college credit for a year-long curriculum where one evening a week they meet to study communication skills, collective bargaining, union administration and leadership, and the history of women in the U.S. labor movement. For the past five years, the AFL-CIO's George Meany Center for Labor Studies at Silver Spring, Maryland, has conducted one or more one-week institutes training active women members in leadership skills. Unions and universities from both developed and less developed countries have adopted parts of these programs for their active women unionists.

Working Women's Networks

One of the most important activities women have undertaken to advance their cause is linking with each other and forming women's networks, those formal and informal contacts among women whose homes, occupations and backgrounds may differ, but who call on and are called on by those in the network for advice and assistance. One example of an international network is the 1975 seminar in Israel of women from widely differing unions and nations. This first such international gathering wrote an official statement of the issues important to working and union women, and many of the participants, includ-

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ing the author, write and exchange news three years later.

In the summer of 1977, a 10-day Pan-African Conference on the Role of Trade Union Women was conducted by the African-American Labor Center, AFL-CIO, in Nairobi, Kenya. Joan Goodin, a former member of the international staff of the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, now executive director of the National Commission on Working Women, National Manpower Institute, attended as she had earlier seminars of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) in Latin America and Asia. At each conference she asked participants to write out their answers to two questions:

Why do women not participate more actively in their unions?

What can be done about it?

"You would think the same person had written all the answers," she reported. "Union women's problems are the same all over the world and union women understand they are all part of the world together."

One participant in the African seminar developed a plan for short courses on a national level. Her words sum up the spirit of the women in all of these conferences: "We wish to... work part and parcel with our men trade unionists. We do not want to be left behind."

Where the third world is concerned, international and United States agencies may be overlooking one of the best possible liaisons to rural women: women trade unionists. These women are not elitists; they often come from rural homes themselves. They want to work to bring the spirit of collective action to rural women. Women unionists may be the best friends any government organization could have for reaching women in the countryside. Yet they are seldom included in any planning. Only one of the initial regional economic plans of the UN, the Latin American, mentioned them and that was because a trade unionist happened to be there in another capacity.

Another working women's network grew out of the Child Care Seminar sponsored by the Coalition of Labor Union Women, an American national network itself. Twenty-four women were chosen by their unions to visit Sweden, Israel, and France during 1977 to study the child care programs. They shared experiences and ideas with women they met. At the same time they formed strong bonds among themselves. Such bonds are important to women in leadership positions who too often find themselves isolated from information and easy peer support of their male associates.

Forum for Unheard Voices

Another example, closer to home, is the Executive Women in State Government network in New York. Formed in 1977 at a conference sponsored by Cornell University, these women administrators welcomed the opportunity to participate in a network that would have practical as well as psychological value. Without an organization, women's victories often go uncelebrated and unrecorded. Networks can change that; they can become a forum for the unheard voices.

Women workers can benefit tremendously from both horizontal and vertical networks in every country. Through them women rank-and-filers can get to know each other and lay plans for a better world together. Through their networks they can reach up to women who already are in responsible positions, and secure their help. Vertical networks help women at both ends. Those below can receive advice and guidance; those above can develop a political base from which to deal. There appears to be little of this kind of activity going on in other countries at the present time, but the beginnings are there. Organized women workers already belong to the oldest

of networks — labor unions — and we should expect that as they participate more actively in their unions, their relationships will become more supportive and continuous.

Contacts on an international level are proliferating. The Agency for International Development, the State Department and the Labor Department sponsor visits of groups and individuals concerned with working women. The Wellesley Center for Research on Women conducted a conference in June 1976 on Women in Development, attended by 500 women policy makers and researchers. In May 1978 it sponsored a second conference, Implementation of Equal Pay and Equal Opportunity Legislation, where administrative machinery was discussed mainly by representatives of industrialized nations. Sharing information at such signal events can have far-reaching effects. Brought together to consider the best means for enforcing equal treatment principles, delegates return home with ideas for more than national machinery. They may have begun to get the idea of networking and wish to experiment with it back home.

A Look Ahead

Women's Bureaus are becoming more common; more women's commissions are being appointed; feminist groups are springing up all over the world. The trend toward formal and informal action on behalf of women workers was greatly accelerated by International Women's Year; the changes were overdue.

A quiet consensus appears to be forming all over the world. The European Community in 1975 conducted the biggest-ever international poll on sex roles and attitudes. The most dissatisfaction among women was found in countries that had been most restrictive toward social change — France, Italy, Luxembourg and Ireland. Moreover, 80 percent of married women workers and 56 percent of married women who do *not* work said they wanted to work. With such a response, it is no surprise to learn that three out of four polled thought the changes occurring in women's roles were changes in the right direction.

Government policies will have to respond to the new consensus for there is no doubt that women are no longer satisfied with their traditional roles. When we can read in the *New York Times* that a Moslem woman of Afghanistan has made the decision to seek a job because "I just decided that now that the children are getting older, I need more to do," we know that a massive social revolution is underway.

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